

RECKLESS RALPH'S

# DIME NOVEL ROUND-UP

A monthly magazine devoted to the collecting, preservation and literature of the old-time dime and nickel novels, libraries and popular story papers.

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## DIME NOVELS AND DEVILTRY

A dispatch to the Boston Journal from Jamaica, Vt., announces the discovery in the mountains of the headquarters "of a criminal gang which for some time has been coining spurious dollars and committing depredations on the surrounding country. Complete counterfeiting outfits were seized, including molds, boxes, kettles, plaster of paris, bismuth, lead, etc. It is a secret society of the blood and thunder variety, now numbering 23 members. It was organized according to its records June 17 of the present year. Its members are young men 18 to 21 years old, living in South Londonderry, Jamaica, West Townsend and Wardsboro, Vermont, and Ashuelot and Winchester, New Hampshire. The band was governed by a captain, first and second officers, secretary, judge of fire-arms, and a board of directors. They styled themselves the United Birds and Brothers. They had organized an elaborate system of signals and secret alphabets, to which the officers now have the key. The secret records were kept by a mystic system, which is translated according to the key by an arrangement of figures." The initiation is described as of the stereotype, blood curdling sort, as to ritual and ceremonies, and the popular solution will be we suppose found in dime novel reading. It is not dime novels however that makes deviltry in this world; the world was full of devils young and old, and deviltry before there were any dime novels current among boys. We suspect the deviltry exists actively before the dime novel becomes current, and that while a boy's reading may impart some su-

perficial color to his lawlessness it does not create deviltry. Take ten thousand boys and give them dime novels "ad neuseam" and you could not get 10,000 young devils as a result. Nine-tenths of all the school boys in New England have read the blood and thunder dime novel with its hackneyed heroes in shape of pirates, burglars, highwaymen, scalp-hunters, etc., but while such reading is not desirable, it is about as unavoidable, unprofitable and permanently harmful, as measles, mumps, chicken-pox and whooping cough. We don't want our children to have them; they don't do any good, and yet in nine cases out of ten they don't do any permanent harm. Sometimes the child dies of these diseases, that, as a rule are not fatal, but that is only when the circumstances and constitution of the child are exceptionally favorable to a fatal result. Just so with the dime novel; nearly all children read them; they don't do any good, and yet they don't do sound children any permanent harm. The normal child outgrows and survives the dime novel trash just as he does the measles and kindred juvenile diseases. The exceptional child may turn out a devil, but his deviltry antedated the dime novel and will survive the extinction of that feeble sort of reading. The truth is that it is useless to attempt to account for the strong natural bias that some boys of the best opportunities and subjected to the best influences have, for a life of crime. They are the "devil's unaccountables." Take the story of Charles Backus, who came of pious, cultivated, scholarly stock; his youth was surrounded by the best of home

kulture and refined influences; his opportunities for education were excellent, and yet this grandson of a college president and a doctor of divinity became a negro minstrel. A negro minstrel is not a criminal, but his apprenticeship to his business is spent in the lowest sort of life and associations. So Aaron Burr, roue, duelist, traitor, was not a natural descent from such a grandfather as Jonathan Edwards. John Irving, the famous burglar, who was killed in New York city, by an old comrade in crime last week, was the son of respectable parents, was brought up under strict moral and religious influences, and was educated in the public schools. Moreover, he was by trade a printer, and was always able to earn his living honestly, being a first-class workman.

But, beginning as a wild lad, he soon showed a fixed bent toward evil. "Johnny was a good-hearted boy," says his uncle, an ex-alderman and a very respectable man, "but he was bound to go to the bad, and I am glad that his career is ended. There must have been something weak in his head," he added. "He was not obliged to become a criminal; his choice of career was entirely voluntary on his part."

Devils make dime novels, so far as furnishing them with a gallery of infamy to select heroes from, but dime novels do not primarily make devils. The exceptional boy that rises from reading a dime novel with a fixed purpose to lead a life of crime, had an irrepressible passion for crime when he sat down to read; if he had not been able to read at all, he would have been a criminal; the novel may color the form which his depravity takes, but he was devil in temperament and purpose by nature; he is not made or marred by the dime novel. Dime novels, doubtless, corrupt something of the literary taste of the young, but nine-tenths of the boys who read them make just as good citizens as boys that never read them; the moral strength and stamina of a boy that is hopelessly uprooted by a dime novel has no chance in this world; he is too feeble to ever walk alone, too impressionable to be trusted to be unleashed from his mother's apron string; the boy who has no force within falls at the first pressure from without, the boy that is capable of sal-

vation may be trusted to survive morally a dime novel, and the boy who cannot survive a dime novel is doomed from birth to defy in his depravity or weakness all the influences that make for his honor and usefulness. We suspect the unchecked ambition and unrebuked thirst for money for its own sake, and not for the upright ends it may accomplish, has made, when joined to indolence, more burglars and scoundrels of all sorts than all the dime novels and flash literature that have been published since the invention of the art of printing.

## HENTY NEWS

First I want to request Mr. Cummings for a little more space in the Roundup.

Second I want to apologize to the many readers and tell them frankly that I am no authority on G. A. Henty. I am just a Henty Fan and have been so since a boy.

Since my article in the June Roundup I have heard from many Henty and Old Boy Book Fans, and my figures I gave then really look foolish.

With the last check up from all and getting together I find that I can name 123 titles and of these 123 I bring this down to 111 actual stories as among the 123 are many duplicates. My own collection, I now have 88.

Also not included in this number is two titles which are in doubt and we can't count now. Then too we have discovered 3 books edited by Henty and feel sure there must have been many more.

Come on Fans if you have any information that you think new or perhaps unknown to most, let me know as I hope in the near future to see an article in the Roundup by one who really is an authority and knows what he is writing about.

If any of you readers know of any facts out of the ordinary or odd facts we would certainly like to know.

I have some odd books of Henty, some gems, some good, and some really museum copies.

I have from the finest of Blackie & Scribner Hentys to the cheapest editions published.

A little known title, Nita, A Tomboy Soldier published by the American Boy in 1903 I have and have saved all these years.



Mr. Brooks gave me the name of two Hentys, one of which I was very much in doubt, The Queens Cup. I picked it up in the back of a little Donohue book and thought certainly it was a mistake as in another book about a year before it did not appear. Then Dorothy's Double is an entirely new one on me. The other two titles he named I have and have known of for years.

As far as I know this was never published in book form except Blackie in London published under the title of A Soldiers Daughter. The Boy Knight known to us was published by Sampson, Low England and under the title of Winning His Spurs and by Brown, Boston as Fighting the Saracens. Only one I know published under three titles.

Both Winning His Spurs and Fighting the Saracens are illustrated with one third, half and two-third pictures and many small ones that are similar to pen and ink sketches. Two really beautiful books.

Sturdy & Strong published by Blackie looks more like an old time Coates edition and more like many of the old Alger books.

Brown of Boston published The Fall of Sebastopol which is the same story as Jack Archer and this is really an old timer. It is 8½x7 one and one-half inches thick. Bound in cloth with heavy board with highly colored paper on both front and back. It was what is known as the Roundabout Series.

The Curse of Carnes Hole I have paper cover and does anyone know if this was ever published in cloth binding.

—W. B. Poage

A fine article on the above is expected soon.

### BOYS WHO NEVER GROW UP by Arthur T. Rich

(Sent in by Alfred Horsey—an article copied from newspaper—name of paper and date of issue unknown.)

A Presbyterian minister in Devon who, recalling his London schooldays, will awaken memories in many a heart.

I met him more than 30 years ago; on the day he was born, in fact. He was about 12 years of age then and the miracle is that at the beginning

of 1939 he is still the same age and, more remarkable, still at school.

Even on the day of his birth he could play football, run races that he always won, wage battles in which he was always successful and, more important, hold a large audience.

He looked at me from a bookstall on King's Cross station and I, the tailor's errand-boy, on my way to fetch finished work from Aldgate, had unwittingly made a life-long friend.

When Tom Merry entered my life I had never heard of Thomas Hardy or Rudyard Kipling. But I entered a realm of literature then that profoundly influenced me.

How many middle-aged, literary highbrows tonight are prepared to make the same admission? Will they, too, not confess to a sneaking regard for Bob Cherry, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, Figgins, and the immortal Billy Bunter, those static schoolboys of juvenile literature, devoured annually since by millions of Britain's youngsters?

Gladly I suffered for Tom Merry, for often he got me into trouble. It was an art in those days in London schools—perhaps it still is—to master the trick of following the adventures of your heroes while long-suffering L. C. C. teachers discoursed on geography and the Rule of Three.

You had to learn to keep the half-penny paper—it's price in those days—firm between your knees and the printed page and keep two ears on the master, one eye on the blackboard and one on Tom Merry & Co.

Often one lesson would pass into another without your being aware of the fact. "What is the shortest distance between two points?" your teacher would enquire suddenly, and you, thinking that the class lingered still on grammar because Tom Merry was just scoring his fifth goal of the match, would reply, "A noun, sir."

One never-to-be-forgotten day my precious volume was purloined. In sympathy for my lack of literary taste, I received from the master, much to my surprise, not the cane, but a copy of Stevenson's "Treasure Island," that I might know what blood and thunder I had been wasting time upon.

But never shall I forget coming upon my teacher in the deserted class room, after hours. He was enjoying

five minutes with my hero and, to my unbounded delight, he was shaking with laughter. He returned the book later. I believe he had read the story right through and enjoyed it.

### In the 'Shell' 30 years

Yet those boys, surely, are terribly backward at school? In 1908 Tom Merry was in the Shell, and he's there yet. And Bob Cherry was in the Remove, and not once in 30 years has he moved up a form. Billy Bunter has had more than 30 birthdays, but he's still at school. I know, because, quite shamefacedly I meet them all again every Christmas.

I suspect, too, that I am not the only one. Jack, Sam and Pete seem to have gone the way of all flesh; Sherlock Holmes is as dead as Spring-heeled Jack; and Tom Brown lies neglected like a forgotten old-boy having completed his course with credit. But everywhere I meet staid grown-up fans who, in secret, spend a passing hour with those schoolboys beside whom Peter Pan must seem a centenarian. One memory of these boys stands out most vividly. It was during the war. I was bending over a dying sapper. Was there anything I could do for him before the end came? There was one thing. Would I read to him the remainder of the Tom Merry sent to him from England? Pathetic, but in a way glorious. Probably he had never heard of Sir Walter Scott or Arnold Bennett, but his last hours were brightened by the long, long memories of youth.

Literary critics may squirm, but here's to Tom Merry, Bob Cherry, Arthur Augustus, Harry Wharton, Stout Billy Bunter and all. May they live long to entertain generations of British schoolboys in their clean healthy English way. And may they never grow up or advance in school by so much as a single form!

### NEWSY NEWS

by Ralph F. Cummings

Who asked for St. Nicholas bound Vol. 27, Nov. 1899 to April 1900?

Visitors I've had this month, are—Aug. 6th Tommy M. Peterson was up here from Youngstown, Ohio, our first meeting. Aug. 8th Sam Tanenbaum was here from Hartford, Conn. Aug. 16 & 17 Ray L. Caldwell of Lancaster,

Pa., and Aug. 26th Bill Erbe from New York City. Am always glad to meet anyone that can get up this way, fellows.

We've had some real hot weather up here for 3 or 4 days. Over a hundred in the shade. Guess we hollered too much, as the first half of the month has been more like fall. And I'm to be in the big parade at Marblehead, up above Boston tomorrow, boy or boy, I'll sweat some, I'm thinking. You know how it is, with us Redmen!

Clyde Wakefield, 6 Peidmont Street, Worcester, Mass., says if it's novels you want, write him, he may be able to help you out.

F. L. Beagle, 48 Hudson Ave., Albany, N. Y., has some bound volumes of London News, Optic's Mags, and others for sale or trade.

Edwin Sissing, 24A Brooklyn Ave., San Jose, Calif., says he has a lot of Buffalo Bill Stories for sale, 1907 to 1912, also Diamond Dicks, Might and Main, Work and Wins, and Liberty Boys of 76.

Herbert Leckenbys Magazines, The Collectors Digest, is coming along fine, full of fine articles on the old boys bloods and all, if it were only printed.

Roy Morris says he was up in the Salvation Army Book store up in Minneapolis, a short while ago, and they had my name and address in their book. Gosh, I must be a pretty popular guy, huh.

Women's Day, a magazine sold at all "A & P Stores", Atlantic & Pacific Food Stores. There's a fine article on "What Frank Merriwell Did To Me." Information sent in by Geo. Flaum, Wakefield, Linville, Tomy Funderberk and others.

Dick Roberts, 77 Church St., Whitinsville, Mass., wants a book on the early days of Kentucky, 1700 to 1750.

John E. Clark of Bridgeport, Conn., says there's a fine article on "Dime Thrillers of Dad's Day Win Respectability With Age," appeared in the "Grit," for Dec. 7th 1947.

The British Mailbag, pub. by R. Hollins, 224 Westwood Rd., Sutton Coldfield, England, price sixpence per issue, is all about mailorder, chats and what-not. A fine little mag.

Alhambra, Calif., Aug. 2, 1948 (AP) The death of William Calvin Morgan, 79, better known as Bronco Bill, was disclosed today. A colorful figure of



the old west, Morgan won the world's championship for breaking wild horses at the Chicago World Fair in 1893. At one time he performed as a marksman and trick rider with Buffalo Bills Wild West Show and later toured the country with a show of his own. Sent in by H. Pitcher.

FLASH! Just heard the good news that Roy Morris of Mason City, Iowa, has just got hitched up. Here's wishing you and the Mrs. all the best of luck, always.

### THE LIFE OF A WOMAN KNOWN TO THOUSANDS

**Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth, the Novelist, Who Has Just Died (June 30th 1897) Had a Hard Fight**

**She Was Deserted By Her Husband**

**Had to work for a living and turned to stories for the "New York Ledger," which finally made her famous**

To thousands of American novel readers the news that Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth was dead came as a personal shock.

She wrote sixty-five novels in her lifetime, every one of which was read by thousands of men and women.

She wrote these novels as a member of the staff of the New York "Ledger" under Mr. Bonner and in their book-form they traveled over the world.

What does "E. D. E. N." stand for? often asked the world. And others answered that the initials were assumed to make the name sensational.

But the right answer to the world was that "E. D. E. N." stood for her christened name, and that when written in full it read "Emma Dorothea Eliza Nevitt Southworth," and she not a member of royalty.

Mrs. Southworth lived, died and worked in her beloved city, Washington. Her odd and ugly cottage stood up over Georgetown, on the Potomac Heights, one porch looking over the Aqueduct Bridge. This cottage she built and paid for with her first earnings. She loved every inch of ground about it; knew every soul worth knowing in the beautiful city below her house.

It was a patriotic spot. On the great Aqueduct Bridge, which a Philadelphian—General Meigs—built, the name of Mr. Jefferson Davis had been erased

from where it had been cut in the stone with other members of the Cabinet, and over Mrs. Southworth's gate the Stars and Stripes floated for four years of civil strife.

Mrs. Southworth had her reasons for flying the flag over the entrance gate instead of the house, for the motto was "He who does not serve under this flag, need not pass under this flag."

She was a bitter Unionist, and gave her time, money and skill to nursing the wounded of General Grant's army that were brought to Washington.

Her family had been mighty Royalists in the early days. Her grandfather, Sir George Granfeldt, came over with Lord Baltimore, as his secretary. Her mother, Susanna Wales, married her guardian, Captain Nevitt, before she was 15. Their daughter, Emma, was born in the old Hillman House in Washington, on New Jersey Avenue, once occupied by Mr. Washington.

She was born in the same room Mr. Washington occupied and his sleeping apartments.

When she was 21 years old, she left Washington, went as a governess in the family of Susan B. Anthony.

Before her marriage, five volumes of short stories were written in connection with Mrs. Francis Henshaw Baden, her stepsister, who is also a writer. Just as she finished "Capitola," she received an offer from England, which she accepted, to edit "The Home Journal." She remained in this position three years.

Before she went to England she was very much impressed with an idea that she would die early of consumption, as her father had, but she entirely regained her strength whilst in England, and lived to be nearly 80 years old, being 79, December 26, last. Mrs. Southworth's husband ran away and left her with two little children to support.

To the question: "How could you ever accomplish so much," Mrs. Southworth once replied: "Two little children needing bread compels one to accomplish much. To write stories was a necessity with me." So many a famous person has been made—through dire grief and poverty.

The adjective sensational, as always applied to Mrs. Southworth's stories, worried her very much. She

believed she could write things of more serious import than appeared in the "Ledger." She confidentially told a friend that she would write pleading letters to Mr. Bonner begging him to accept more serious work and let some one else do the emotional love stories; she would earnestly put forth every argument in favor of laying down the pen of her present work and doing something more befitting her mentality.

Mr. Bonner's answer was always very characteristic: "The public craves the matter you are sending. I will accept what serious work you wish to add, but the novels you are now writing are what is needed and required."

One of the interesting answers to the charge of being too sensational is that of the Librarian of Congress. It was recommended that fiction should be curtailed, probably abolished, and the Librarian sent back word that Mrs. Southworth's works must be included, for there was more call for hers than any other books in the library.

It is said that Mrs. Southworth contemplated writing a "Life of Christ," which she said if she should write would be the work of her life, but so far as is known she never commended it.

To an officer of the Woman's National Press Association, of which Mrs. Southworth was a member for many years, she said: "I cannot be interrupted when I commence a story. It all seems to come at once. So I don't know whether I have a good brain or a bad brain. I must write, write, write, or it is gone."

On writing days she frequently sat up until 2 o'clock in the morning. The days set apart for writing were Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and part of Friday. On Friday afternoons and evenings she received her friends, and the well-known cottage was generally crowded on reception hours.

She also told the same friend, when speaking of thought being more rapid than she could write that her typewriter had been of great assistance to her, enabled her "to catch up with thought," as she said.

She learned to typewrite after she was 70 years old.

The desk which she used, and which stands in her library, was her father's,

and all writing materials were carefully arranged and kept in that desk, of which she was very fond.

The Southworth cottage would never impress one with grandeur. It looks something like a country inn, is frame with peaked roof, painted an ugly red; two sides have porches. The cottage is on a high eminence, and the fences, porches and some windows are covered with vines, Virginia creepers, Madeira vines and honeysuckle.

She had a great many pets—cats, dogs, and at various times horses.

She always insisted that animals should be treated with great care, approaching the care usually given human beings. One dog, Jack, an especial favorite, had always slept on her bed until her last illness of five weeks, when he could not be persuaded to lie there, but, instead, would lie under the bed.

She would say: "When I open my eyes in the other world the first thing I will see will be Jack."

Another fad was flowers, which she would never allow to be thrown carelessly away. Once she became really angry because a servant threw some faded flowers in an ash pile. She required that flowers when fading be laid under a tree and covered with leaves—leaves and flowers to wither together.

It has been stated that Mr. Bonner paid her \$200 weekly, but those who knew her intimately say he paid her \$150 weekly, and that Mr. Elverten offered her a large amount but she felt that it was her duty to remain with Mr. Bonner. She leaves a married daughter, Mrs. Lawrence, and a son, Dr. Southworth. Dr. Southworth resides at the cottage. A niece, daughter of Mrs. Baden, married the journalist, Mr. Maurice Lowe.

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They say whiskey inflames the stomach, beer produces Bright's disease. Brandy ruins your kidneys, burgandy brings on the gout, and absinthe destroys the brain. Now we know typhoid and malaria lurk in water, and tuberculosis in milk, so what is a thirsty man to drink? TRY COFFEE.  
—Sent in by W. B. Poage.

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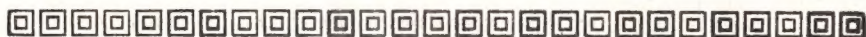
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Engine! Engine. A Story of Fire Protection, by Kenneth H. Dunshee, 1939. Colored plates of various models of old fire engines from when first made, also the Life of a Fireman, etc. Fair condition, but well worth the price I am asking, \$3.50.

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